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TO RUEHSK/AMEMBASSY MINSK IMMEDIATE 0779  
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 0516  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHMCSSU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 8762  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 9344  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 3188

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 030036

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL AMGT ODIP OFDP BO

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST FOR EMBASSY MINSK

REF: A. MINSK 191

1B. STATE 28931

Classified By: ACTING A/S KURT VOLKER

FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST. The Department, in consultation with other USG agencies, has determined it is in the USG interest to reduce the number of U.S. diplomatic staff at embassy Minsk as demanded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ref A. Embassy Minsk is instructed to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) before 3:00 PM local time on March 24 that the United States will reduce U.S. diplomatic staff at Embassy Minsk to the level of the Belarusian mission to the United States, despite our continued objections that such parity is unwarranted and not based on a standard in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Stress the U.S. expectation that Belarus will honor all its obligations under international conventions and agreements. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

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Objectives  
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12. (C) Embassy Minsk is requested to pursue the following objectives with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before 3:00 PM local time on March 24, 2008:

-- Provide a list of 17 U.S. diplomatic staff that will remain in Belarus as U.S. diplomats accredited to the Republic of Belarus. (List will be forwarded separately to Charge by email from EUR.)

-- Inform the MFA that United States diplomatic staff who will not remain in Belarus have been instructed by the Department to depart Belarus, and that we are making every effort to complete their departure by March 27, 2008.

-- Emphasize that the United States is taking this step reluctantly, in order to maintain our diplomatic presence in Minsk, which serves important objectives.

-- Reinforce U.S. regret that Belarus has chosen a path that significantly complicates the possibility of improved relations with the U.S. and our hope that the situation will change in the future.

-- Stress that the demand to reduce the size of the U.S. mission to equal the size of the Belarusian mission in the United States is unwarranted, not in keeping with normal

diplomatic practice, and is not based upon a standard in the Vienna Convention.

-- Reiterate that Ambassador Khvostov is welcome to return to the U.S. at any time, and we strongly hope both he and Ambassador Stewart return to their posts shortly.

-- Stress the strong U.S. expectation that Belarus will immediately cease its various actions against the U.S. mission and honor all its obligations under international conventions and agreements, consistent with the written commitment to this effect that the President of the United States received from President Lukashenka in 1998.

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Background  
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¶3. (C) The Department has consulted with other USG agencies with a presence at Embassy Minsk and has agreed on a list of essential positions at the embassy at a staffing level of 17. This list will be emailed separately to Charge from EUR. Charge should present this list to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶4. (U) The Department is working to provide the departing personnel with necessary authorizations for travel and transportation, which will be sent septel.

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¶5. (U) Point of Contact in the Office of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus Affairs is Stephen Gee, Desk Officer for Belarus, 202-736-4443, or GEESJ@STATE.SGOV.GOV. Administrative point of contact in EUR-IO/EX is Pri Sen, Post Management Officer, 202-736-7513 or SENPX@STATE.GOV . RICE